DEMOCRATIA

The Complete Story, Books I–VI

How democracy was created, destroyed, and saved — again and again — in a jungle.

Original story by Mrinaal Jain
Books II–VI: a continuation

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Democratia I

How Democracy Was Saved

A Democratia Story

Long, long time ago, a jungle was divided into two parts. The left part had hard-working animals who worked hard. The right one had a lazy elephant.

The animals helped each other. But one fox was being too mischievous.

So animals met and agreed that it would be helpful if a leader is chosen and a government too.

They decided on being a democracy.

Everyone got one chance to vote a leader. An elephant got the most votes — that is, a majority.

The elephant was powerful and didn't fear the lion. Everyone would listen to him because he is big and also makes a loud noise.

A wise owl had warned everyone to vote with care, as only power doesn't ensure wiseness.

But the elephant wasn't morally grounded and educated.

Once, he was roaming on the left part's boundary when he chanced to meet a lion. Though he trumpeted loudly, the lion was unperturbed.

Seeing this, the elephant was shocked — because everyone listened to him in his part of the jungle. He asked the lion why he wasn't fearful of him. After all, he is the leader.

The lion said: you're but an elected leader. You're always at the mercy of your voters.

The elephant was convinced that he would become more powerful if the lion joined his party. So he carried him on his back like a king.

Monkeys loved all this news! They accepted this new normal without question.

Other innocent animals also had to accept the elephant and lion duo. They also thought elephant (power) and lion (money) are best for them.

The lion found some loyal assistants who would keep him updated about the jungle. They brought him news daily.

Monkeys carried all orders of the lion to all citizens in the name of the elephant.

Soon, innocent animals became his prey.

Initially they had thought they were safe, though they knew that a lion can't survive without eating someone's flesh. They were in grave danger. The lion had acted like a chameleon. His true colours were now revealed.

Their leader, the elephant, was nowhere to be seen. They went to the old wise owl. He asked them to unite and fight.

Though everyone was fearful, they agreed to come and protest. The lion feared that he couldn't face so many animals united, so he fled the left part.

He was informed by a fox about the march against him. This gave him time to flee.

But this is how democracy was saved.

THE END

of Democratia I

Democratia II

The Jungle Learns to Watch

A Democratia Story

The lion was gone. The elephant was still missing. The animals stood in the clearing, unsure of what democracy even meant anymore.

The wise owl spoke again.

> *“You saved yourselves today. But saving democracy once is not enough. You must learn to watch it — always.”*

1. Where Did the Elephant Go?

The animals searched the jungle and found the elephant hiding near the riverbank, ashamed.

> *“I let the lion ride on my back,” he said. “I thought his strength made me stronger. Instead, it made me his shadow.”*

The owl didn't scold him. Instead, she asked the animals: “Should a leader be removed just for one mistake? Or should he be given a chance — under new rules?”

The animals argued. The tortoise, who rarely spoke, finally said: “Let him lead again — but not alone. Let others watch him too.”

2. The Council is Born

So the animals created something new: a Council — one representative from each family of the jungle. A crow for the birds, a badger for the burrowers, a deer for the grazers, the tortoise for the slow and steady.

The elephant would still lead, but now every big decision had to pass through the Council first.

> *“Power that is watched,” said the owl, “is safer than power that is trusted blindly.”*

3. The Fox Returns

The fox — the same one who had warned the lion and helped him escape — came back to the jungle, expecting to be forgiven quietly, as before.

But this time, the crow (who represented the birds on the Council) asked him publicly: “Why did you help the lion instead of warning us?”

The fox had no good answer. The Council decided he could stay in the jungle, but he could no longer whisper secrets to leaders in private. All his words to the elephant now had to be spoken in the open, in front of the Council.

This is how the jungle learned about transparency.

4. The Monkeys Learn to Question

The monkeys, who had once carried the lion's orders without asking questions, felt foolish now.

> *“We just repeated what we were told,” said the eldest monkey. “We never asked if it was true.”*

The owl gave them a new job: from now on, the monkeys would carry news and check it first. If they weren't sure something was true, they had to say so.

5. A New Kind of Danger

Just when things seemed settled, a clever hyena arrived at the jungle's edge. She didn't roar like the lion. She smiled, made jokes, and told every animal exactly what they wanted to hear.

> *“Vote for me,” she said, “and I'll give the birds more sky, the grazers more grass, and the burrowers more tunnels — all at once, all for free.”*

Many animals cheered. But the tortoise, slow to speak but slow to be fooled, asked: “Where will all of this come from?”

The hyena had no answer. She slipped away into the trees before the Council could question her further.

6. The Jungle's Promise

That evening, all the animals — elephant, owl, crow, badger, deer, tortoise, even the monkeys and the reformed fox — gathered under the old banyan tree.

They made a promise to one another:

> *No leader would go unwatched again.*

No order would be followed without a question.

No stranger's promises would be believed without asking “how?”

And no animal, however small, would stay silent when something felt wrong.

The owl looked over the jungle and smiled.

THE END

of Democratia II

Democratia III

The Hyena's Promise

A Democratia Story

The jungle had grown wiser since the lion fled. But wisdom fades fast when comfort returns — and comfort had returned.

1. The Hyena Comes Back — Louder This Time

The hyena had not forgotten the jungle. She had only waited.

This time, she didn't slip in quietly. She arrived with a parade of laughing jackals, singing about “a jungle where no one goes hungry, no one works too hard, and everyone gets everything.”

The younger animals, who hadn't lived through the lion's days, were dazzled.

> *“Who is she?” asked a young rabbit.*
>
> *“Someone who smiles a lot,” said an old badger, “and answers nothing.”*

2. The Council is Tested

The Council — the same one formed after the lion fled — called the hyena to speak before them, in the open, as was now the custom.

> *“How will you give the birds more sky?” asked the crow.*
>
> *“By taking some from the mountains,” said the hyena smoothly, though there was no mountain nearby.*
>
> *“How will you give the grazers more grass without more rain?” asked the deer.*

The hyena laughed. “Details, details. Trust me, not the questions.”

The tortoise, watching quietly, finally spoke:

> *“A promise that cannot answer a question is not a promise. It is a trap with honey on it.”*

3. The Election

Despite the warnings, the hyena's charm worked on many. An election was called — the jungle's very first, run properly, with every animal casting one vote, counted openly by the owl and the badger together.

The elephant, humbled since his fall, did not campaign with noise or power. He simply answered every question honestly, even when the truth was unflattering.

> *“I made mistakes,” he told the animals. “I let myself be ridden. I won't promise perfection. I'll promise to listen — and to let you watch.”*

The hyena promised everything. The elephant promised honesty and oversight.

4. The Count

The vote was close. Many animals were dazzled by promises. But enough remembered the lion, the fear, the silence — and chose the harder, plainer truth over the easy, glittering one.

The elephant won — not by a landslide, but by a margin built on memory.

The hyena, seeing the count, did not flee like the lion. She simply shrugged.

> *“There's always a next season,” she said, and disappeared into the tall grass, waiting.*

5. The Owl's Warning

That night, the owl gathered the animals one last time.

> *“You were not fooled today. But do not mistake one good choice for permanent safety. The hyena did not lose forever. She only lost this time — because you asked questions, because the Council watched, because the vote was counted honestly, and because enough of you remembered what silence costs.”*
>
> *“Democracy is not a fortress you build once. It is a fire you must keep feeding — with questions, with attention, with courage to speak, and with memory of what happens when you stop.”*

6. The Promise Renewed

The animals renewed their vow under the banyan tree — the same vow as before, but now with one line added:

> *“And when someone promises us everything and explains nothing, we will ask ‘how’ — and we will wait for a real answer.”*

THE END

of Democratia III

Democratia IV

The Symbol on the Hyena's Chest

A Democratia Story

Years had passed. The elephant, once young and quick to trumpet, was now old. His steps were slower, his voice softer. He still sat on the Council, but he spoke less — and when he did, fewer animals leaned in to listen.

1. A New Face, An Old Hunger

The hyena did not come alone this time.

She arrived with a new team — younger, sharper, better rehearsed. At the front walked a smiling jackal wearing a painted leaf around his neck, shaped like a dove. “A symbol of peace,” he told everyone. “We are not like the old hyena. We are something new.”

Behind them circled a group of vultures, calling themselves “friends of the forest,” promising to “clean up” whatever the jungle no longer needed.

And trailing quietly at the back — new foxes, new jackals, animals the jungle didn't yet have names for. All hungry. All new.

2. “She's Changed,” They Said

Word spread fast among the younger animals, who had never seen the hyena's first betrayal.

> *“She's not like before,” said a young deer. “Look — she wears peace now.”*
>
> *“She brought friends this time,” said a rabbit. “Surely one hyena alone was the problem. A team is safer.”*

Even some who remembered the old hyena began to doubt themselves. “Maybe she really did change,” they whispered. “It has been many seasons.”

3. The Elephant Tries to Speak

The old elephant raised his trunk at the Council meeting. It shook slightly now.

> *“I know that walk,” he said slowly. “I know that smile. I wore a rider on my back once, too, and called it strength.”*

But his voice, once loud enough to command the whole jungle, now barely carried past the front row. The young animals shuffled, whispered, and

looked toward the hyena's team instead — louder, brighter, wearing symbols that were easy to trust and easier to repeat.

“He's old,” someone murmured. “Things were different in his time.”

3½. The Elephant's Son

Among the younger animals stood the old elephant's son — broad already, though not yet full-grown, with his father's same watchful eyes.

He had grown up hearing the story of the lion who once rode his father's back, told so many times it had become almost a lullaby. So when the jackal arrived with his painted dove and the hyena walked in wearing her new, practiced calm, the son recognized something his father was now too tired to chase down and name.

> *“I've seen this before,” he said at the Council, stepping forward. “Not with my own eyes — but in every story my father ever told me. The smile changes. The symbol changes. The shape of it never does.”*

The young animals turned to look at him — and then, just as quickly, turned away.

> *“He's only repeating his father,” said one. “Of course he's suspicious. It runs in the family.”*
>
> *“He's never led anything himself,” said another. “Easy to warn against danger when you've never had to make a real decision.”*

Even some who respected the old elephant found reasons to doubt the son. “The father earned his caution the hard way. The son has only borrowed it.”

So the Council thanked him for his concern, the way one thanks a child for a drawing, and moved on to matters they considered more urgent — like where to seat the jackal's team for the coming feast.

The son said nothing more that day. But he began doing what his father, in his prime, had never quite thought to do: he started walking the fences himself, quietly, at dusk, matching what he saw there against every story his father had ever told him — long before the young crow began her own count, and long before anyone else thought to look.

4. The Vultures Get to Work

Quietly, while the jackal spoke of peace and the hyena spoke of change, the vultures began circling the jungle's edges — the old watering hole, the grove the badgers had tended for two generations, the paths the tortoise had walked since she was young.

> *"Just clearing what's no longer needed," the vultures said, whenever anyone asked.*

No one on the Council had asked them to. But by the time anyone noticed, the vultures were already inside the fence.

5. The Owl, Now Very Old Herself, Whispers One Last Time

The owl could barely fly anymore. But she found the young crow — granddaughter of the very first crow on the Council — and spoke to her alone, quietly, so as not to be laughed at by the crowd dazzled by symbols and smiles.

> *"A symbol is not a promise kept. A team is not innocence. New faces can carry old hungers."*
>
> *"How do we know, then?" asked the young crow. "How do we tell peace from a painted leaf?"*

The owl looked toward the vultures at the fence, and toward the elephant, alone now at the edge of the clearing.

> *"You watch what they do at the edges, while everyone is looking at the symbol on their chest. You ask the ones who remember, even when their voices shake. And you never let a Council go quiet just because its oldest voice has grown soft."*

THE END

of Democratia IV

Democratia V

The Master Behind the Symbol

A Democratia Story

The election came. The hyena's team — smiling jackal, dove symbol, promises of peace and plenty — won easily. The younger animals danced. The jungle buzzed with a new kind of energy: banners, songs, gatherings under torchlight, everyone talking about the change that was finally coming.

1. The Showmanship Begins

There were parades. There were feasts. The jackal with the dove symbol gave speeches every few days, each one louder and more colorful than the last, though none of them said very much.

The animals loved it. It felt like something was happening — even though, if anyone had stopped to ask what exactly changed today, no one could quite answer.

2. Nothing Changed. But No One Checked.

Seasons passed.

The watering hole was smaller now. The badgers' grove had thinned. The old paths the tortoise walked had new, unfamiliar tracks cut through them at night. But these were small things, noticed at the corners of the eye, not the center of attention — and the center of attention was always the next celebration, the next speech, the next promise.

The young crow — granddaughter of the first — did notice. She flew to the fences, to the edges, to the quiet places no one visited anymore.

> *“Ka-ka! Ka-ka!” she called, again and again, pointing with her wings toward the thinning grove, the shrinking water, the strange tracks.*

But her calls were thin against the noise of drums and celebration. A few animals glanced up. Most didn't.

> *“That's just the crow being dramatic,” someone said. “Things are better than ever. Look how happy everyone is.”*

3. The Lion, Watching From Afar

Far beyond the jungle's borders, in the shadows past the tall grass, the lion watched it all — and smiled the smile of someone whose plan was working exactly as intended.

It was he who had first found the hyena, long ago, back when she was young and hungry and easily convinced. It was he who had, quietly, over many seasons, sent her back — and then sent the jackal, and then the vultures, and then the new foxes no one had names for.

He never entered the jungle himself. He never roared, never showed his face at the Council, never let a single animal connect his name to any of it.

Instead, from the edges, he collected his reward — quietly, patiently. A share of the watering hole. A portion of the grove. A path through the fence, unwatched, unquestioned. Small takings, spread thin enough that no single animal could point and say “there — that's the theft.”

> *“The trick,” the lion murmured to no one, watching the parade lights flicker in the distance, “was never to rule the jungle again. Only to make sure they never looked at the fences while I fed at them.”*

4. The Crow Tries the Council

Desperate, the young crow brought her findings to the Council itself — the very body built, generations ago, to watch power and ask questions.

But the Council, too, had changed. Half its seats were now filled with animals loyal to the jackal's showmanship, more interested in the next celebration than the old crow's warnings. The elephant, older still, tried to speak in her support — but his voice, already faint, was drowned by cheerful noise before it could finish.

> *“Show us proof,” they said. “Show us the lion himself, or there is nothing to discuss.”*

But the crow had no lion to show them — only tracks, and thinning groves, and a feeling she could not yet prove.

4½. What the Son Had Already Seen

When the young crow brought her findings to the Council and was waved off for lacking proof, she did not leave empty-handed for long. That same evening, the old elephant's son sought her out at the edge of the grove.

> *“I have been watching the fences since before you started counting,” he said. “Not seasons of proof — but enough marks, enough tracks, enough missing water to know your ka-ka wasn't drama.”*

He showed her what he'd kept: a memory of the grove's edges as they'd been each season, held against what they'd become. Alone, his word had never been enough — too young, they'd said, too eager to see his father's old fears everywhere. But matched against the crow's own count, the two together formed something the Council could no longer wave away as one voice being dramatic and another being sentimental.

> *“They didn't believe either of us alone,” the son said. “Maybe two dismissed voices, added together, weigh what one trusted voice would have.”*

The crow looked at him for a long moment.

> *“Then we don't go to the Council as two voices anymore. We go as one count, kept by two watchers who never stopped — even when no one was listening to either of us.”*

It was this combined record — the son's early, patient watching and the crow's louder, more recent warnings — that finally gave the Council something harder to dismiss than a single dramatic crow or a single overprotective son. It was not proof of the lion himself, not yet. But it was the first thread thick enough that pulling it would eventually matter, when the jungle was finally ready to pull.

5. The Owl's Last Words

The old owl, nearly blind now, called the young crow to her one final time.

“You will not catch him by looking for his face,” she said. “He has made sure he has none, here. You will only catch him by counting what is missing — season after season — until the pattern is too large to deny. That is slower than a roar. It is also the only way that works against someone who has learned not to roar at all.”

“And until then?” asked the crow.

“Until then, you keep calling. Ka-ka, ka-ka — even when no one turns their head. Because the day they finally do turn, they will need someone who never stopped.”

THE END

of Democratia V

Democratia VI

They Say

A Democratia Story

They say it began with a season of strange dryness — not the kind caused by weather, but the kind that comes when a watering hole has been quietly shrinking for years, until one day there simply isn't enough.

1. They Say the Grove Went Silent

They say it began with a season of strange dryness — not the kind caused by weather, but the kind that comes when a watering hole has been quietly shrinking for years, until one day there simply isn't enough.

They say it was the grazers who noticed first — not the crow's warnings, but their own hunger. The grass that should have covered the western slope by now covered barely half of it. The badgers, digging new burrows, hit old vulture tracks where no burrow of theirs had ever been.

> *"They say the young crow warned us of this, seasons ago," an old badger murmured. "We called her dramatic."*

2. They Say the Elephant Spoke Once More

They say the old elephant, who had grown so quiet the young ones forgot he could still trumpet, rose one evening at the Council and asked a single question — not loud, but clear enough, finally, that the noise of celebration could not drown it:

> *"Where has it all gone?"*

No one had an answer. Not the jackal with the dove symbol. Not the vultures, who suddenly had urgent business elsewhere. Not even the hyena, whose smile, for the first time in a generation, faltered.

3. They Say the Crow Was Finally Heard

They say the young crow did not gloat. She simply opened her wings toward the fences and said what she had been saying for seasons:

> *"Come and count with me. Not trust me — count with me."*

So they did. Animal by animal, they walked the edges the celebrations had kept them from ever visiting — the shrunken water, the thinned grove, the paths cut through fences that were never meant to open.

> *“They say counting is slower than believing,” the crow told them, “but it is the only kind of truth that survives a good enough smile.”*

4. They Say the Trail Led Outward

They say that once the animals began counting instead of celebrating, the trail did not end at the jackal, or the vultures, or even the hyena. It led further — past the fence, into the tall grass, toward a shadow that had never once entered the jungle to take anything by force.

They say the lion was old too, by then. Old, and no longer as careful as he once was — because for so many seasons, no one had been counting.

> *“He never took the jungle,” the elephant said quietly, when the trail was finally laid bare before the Council. “He only waited at its edges, for as long as we were too busy watching the show to watch the fence.”*

5. They Say the Jungle Did Not Cheer This Time

They say that when the truth was finally spoken aloud, there was no parade, no torchlight, no songs. Just a long silence, and then the slow, tired sound of animals returning to the fences — not to celebrate, but to rebuild what had thinned while they weren't looking.

The hyena's team was removed from the Council, not by force, but by vote — the same quiet, ordinary tool that had once let her in. The vultures scattered. The lion, they say, was never seen in the jungle at all; only his absence at the fence, once the counting began, told them he had finally been noticed.

6. What They Say Now

They say the young crow, grown older, still visits the fences every season, whether or not anyone asks her to. Not because danger always announces itself. But because, she says,

> *“the last one didn't roar, and the one before that wore peace on his chest, and the one before that never showed his face at all. The shape changes. The watching cannot stop.”*

They say the elephant, now very old indeed, told the young ones one final thing before his voice grew too soft to carry even in silence:

> *“A quiet leader is not a weak one, if he still asks the right question. And a jungle that only listens to noise will always miss the ones who count in silence — both those who steal that way, and those who watch that way. Learn to tell them apart.”*

THE END

of Democratia VI — the complete story

Discussion Questions & Civic Glossary

For classroom or family reading

A Democratia Story

Discussion Questions — Book I

1. Why did the animals decide to choose a leader instead of continuing without one?

2. The owl warned that “power doesn't ensure wiseness.” What did she mean, and was she right about the elephant?

3. Why do you think the elephant let the lion “ride on his back”?

4. What finally made the animals brave enough to stand up to the lion?

5. Do you think choosing a leader by majority vote guarantees a good leader? Why or why not?

Civic Concepts in This Book

Democracy: A system where leaders are chosen by the people's votes, and power belongs to the citizens who elect them.

Majority: The largest share of votes — enough to win an election, though not necessarily most of the whole population.

Accountability: The idea that a leader must answer for their actions to the people who elected them.

Collective action: People uniting and acting together — shown here as the animals' protest that drove the lion away.

Discussion Questions — Book II

1. Why did the animals decide to forgive the elephant but still create a Council?

2. What is the difference between the fox whispering secrets privately and speaking in front of the Council? Why does it matter?

3. How did the monkeys' new job change the way news travelled through the jungle?

4. The tortoise asked the hyena, “Where will all of this come from?” Why is this an important question to ask any leader who makes big promises?

5. What does the owl mean when she says “not every danger roars”?

Civic Concepts in This Book

Checks and balances: A system where power is divided or overseen by multiple bodies, so no single leader acts unchecked — shown here by the new Council.

Transparency: Openness in decision-making — shown when the fox must speak in front of the Council instead of whispering in private.

Free press: Media (or messengers, like the monkeys) who report news honestly and verify facts rather than simply repeating what those in power say.

Populism: A political style that promises quick, sweeping benefits to ordinary people, often without explaining how those promises will be kept — shown by the hyena.

Discussion Questions — Book III

1. Why didn't the hyena have a good answer when the crow and deer asked her 'how'?

2. The tortoise says a promise that can't answer a question is “a trap with honey on it.” What does this mean?

3. Compare the elephant's campaign to the hyena's. Which would you have found more convincing as a young animal in the jungle, and why?

4. Why does the owl warn the animals not to feel too safe just because they made one good choice?

5. What does the jungle add to its promise at the end of Book III, and why is that addition important?

Civic Concepts in This Book

Election: A formal, organized process where every citizen casts one vote and votes are counted openly and honestly.

Campaign promises: What a candidate says they will do if chosen as leader — which should be examined by asking 'how,' not just believed.

Informed voting: Choosing a leader based on facts, memory, and honest answers rather than charm or exciting promises alone.

Institutional memory: A community's collective memory of past events (like the lion's rule) that helps it avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Discussion Questions — Book IV

1. Why did the young animals trust the jackal's peace symbol so quickly?

2. Compare the reasons the Council dismisses the old elephant and the reasons it dismisses his son. What do the two dismissals have in common?

3. Why do you think the vultures were able to start working at the jungle's edges without anyone officially agreeing to it?

4. What does the owl mean by “a symbol is not a promise kept”?

5. If you were on the Council, what would you have needed to hear from the elephant or his son to take their warning seriously?

Civic Concepts in This Book

Symbolism in politics: Using images or gestures (like a peace symbol) to build trust quickly — which can be sincere or can be used to mask true intentions.

Ageism / dismissing voices: Doubting someone's warning because they are 'too old' or 'too young,' rather than examining what they actually say.

Mission creep: Small, unauthorized actions (like the vultures 'clearing' land) that quietly expand beyond what was ever approved.

Vigilance: The ongoing effort of watching and questioning, even — especially — when things seem calm or celebratory.

Discussion Questions — Book V

1. Why did the celebrations make it harder for animals to notice what was happening at the fences?

2. How is the lion's strategy in Book V different from his approach in Book I? Why might this be more dangerous?

3. Why wasn't the crow's warning enough on its own for the Council to act?

4. What changed when the son's record and the crow's record were combined?

5. The owl says you can't catch this danger “by looking for his face.” What does she mean, and what should the crow look for instead?

Civic Concepts in This Book

Distraction politics: Using constant spectacle, celebration, or noise to keep attention away from quieter, more important problems.

Plausible deniability: Arranging things so a person benefiting from wrongdoing can never be directly and provably connected to it.

Corroboration: When two or more independent witnesses or records support each other, making a claim much harder to dismiss than either alone.

Slow accountability: Uncovering wrongdoing gradually, through patient observation and pattern-tracking, rather than through one dramatic confrontation.

Discussion Questions — Book VI

1. Why do you think the badgers and grazers noticed the problem before anyone acted on the crow's warnings?

2. What does it mean that the jungle 'did not cheer' when the truth finally came out? Why might that reaction matter as much as the truth itself?

3. The hyena's team was removed 'by vote, the same quiet, ordinary tool that had once let her in.' Why is this an important detail?

4. The elephant's final words ask the young ones to 'learn to tell apart' those who count in silence for good reasons and those who do it to take advantage. How might they do that?

5. Looking back across all six books, how does the jungle's idea of 'danger' change — from a roaring lion, to a smiling hyena, to a symbol-wearing team, to someone who is never even seen?

Civic Concepts in This Book

Pattern recognition: Identifying wrongdoing not from a single dramatic event but from noticing the same small losses repeating over time.

Peaceful removal of power: Ending a leader's or group's authority through lawful means like voting, rather than force or violence.

Civic memory across generations: Passing the lessons and vigilance of one generation (the crow, the elephant) on to the next, so hard-won caution isn't lost.

Restoration: The quiet, unglamorous work of rebuilding what was lost — shown here as the animals return to the fences not to celebrate, but to repair.

Illustration Briefs

Scene-by-scene guidance for the illustrator

A Democratia Story

Illustration Briefs — Book I

For the illustrator: each row describes one page/spread — setting, characters, action, and mood — to guide artwork consistent with the original series style.

Scene	Setting & Mood	Characters & Action	Visual Notes
Opening	Wide jungle vista, split into two halves — one lush and busy, one calmer.	No characters yet; establish the two-part jungle setting.	Warm, storybook palette; sets up contrast between the two sides.
The Vote	A jungle clearing, animals gathered.	All animals raising paws/wings to vote; elephant looks pleased.	Busy, hopeful crowd scene; owl watching from a branch, slightly worried.
Elephant Meets Lion	Jungle boundary line, dusk.	Elephant trumpeting; lion standing still, unimpressed.	Tension in body language; lion's calm vs. elephant's bluster.
The Lion Rides the Elephant	Open jungle path.	Lion seated atop elephant's back like a king; monkeys cheering nearby.	Visual symbol of misplaced power; monkeys' excitement should look naive.
The Prey	Shadowy jungle interior.	Smaller animals fearful, lion's silhouette looming.	Darker mood; used sparingly to signal danger without being frightening for young readers.
The March	Jungle clearing, daytime.	All animals united, walking together toward the lion's territory; owl leading.	Triumphant, determined crowd; lion fleeing in background.

Illustration Briefs — Book II

For the illustrator: each row describes one page/spread — setting, characters, action, and mood — to guide artwork consistent with the original series style.

Scene	Setting & Mood	Characters & Action	Visual Notes
The Riverbank	Quiet riverside, early morning, muted colours.	Elephant alone, head lowered, ashamed; owl and animals approaching.	Contrast his former grandeur with this humbled posture.
Council Formed	Clearing with a large flat rock as a meeting place.	Crow, badger, deer, tortoise take positions around elephant; owl presiding.	Show a circle/round formation — visually distinct from the old single-throne image of the elephant.
The Fox's Return	Same clearing, daytime, in front of others.	Fox facing the crow and Council openly, no shadows or private corners.	Bright, exposed lighting to reinforce 'transparency' visually.
Monkeys Fact-Checking	Treetops, monkeys comparing notes.	Monkeys huddled, checking a story before repeating it; one shaking head 'not sure yet.'	Playful but thoughtful expressions — contrast with earlier blind repeating.
The Hyena Arrives	Jungle edge, dusk, golden but slightly uneasy light.	Hyena smiling broadly, surrounded by excited younger animals; tortoise looking skeptical in foreground.	Her smile should feel a little too perfect/salesman-like.
The Vow Under the Banyan Tree	Large banyan tree at night, warm lantern-like light (fireflies).	Full cast gathered in a circle, including reformed fox and monkeys.	Unity and warmth; visually mirror the Council circle from Scene 2.

Illustration Briefs — Book III

For the illustrator: each row describes one page/spread — setting, characters, action, and mood — to guide artwork consistent with the original series style.

Scene	Setting & Mood	Characters & Action	Visual Notes
The Hyena's Parade	Jungle path, bright daylight, festive.	Hyena leading a parade of laughing jackals with banners/song.	Deliberately dazzling and colorful — contrast with quieter, more sincere Council scenes later.
Questioned by the Council	Council clearing, formal seating.	Hyena facing crow and deer's pointed questions; tortoise watching from the side.	Her confident smile should look slightly strained under real questions.
Election Day	Jungle clearing set up for voting — leaves or pebbles as ballots.	All animals lined up; owl and badger counting together.	Orderly, communal, hopeful mood; show diversity of the whole cast voting.
The Close Count	Same clearing, tension in the air.	Owl and badger tallying; animals watching anxiously.	Suspenseful framing — close-up on the tally, animals' faces in the background.
The Hyena Withdraws	Edge of tall grass, dusk.	Hyena shrugging, turning away calmly; not fleeing in fear like the lion did.	Her calm exit should feel unsettling — she is not defeated, only waiting.
Renewing the Vow	Banyan tree at night, same as Book II's closing image but with visible growth/age to the tree.	Full cast, older now, reciting the renewed vow.	Echo Book II's ending composition to show continuity and time passing.

Illustration Briefs — Book IV

For the illustrator: each row describes one page/spread — setting, characters, action, and mood — to guide artwork consistent with the original series style.

Scene	Setting & Mood	Characters & Action	Visual Notes
The New Team Arrives	Jungle entrance, bright banners, a crowd forming.	Jackal at front wearing dove-shaped leaf symbol; hyena behind him, softer/calmer than before; vultures circling above; unnamed foxes trailing at the back.	Visually layer the group: warm/trustworthy at front, ominous at back — guide the eye from charming to unsettling.
Young Animals Debating	Small clearing, daytime.	Young deer and rabbit talking eagerly; old badger skeptical nearby.	Body language should show generational contrast — eager youth vs. weary experience.
The Elephant's Faint Words	Council clearing, elephant standing but stooped.	Elephant speaking; younger animals distracted, glancing toward the jackal's colorful group instead.	Use visual noise (bright colors, motion) near the jackal to show why the elephant's quiet grey figure gets overlooked.
The Son Steps Forward	Same Council clearing.	Young elephant son speaking earnestly; Council members exchanging dismissive glances.	His posture should mirror his father's from Book I — same watchfulness, different age.
The Son Walks the Fences Alone	Jungle fence line, dusk, quiet and empty.	Young elephant alone, examining tracks and marks at the fence.	Solitary, contemplative mood; visually establish this as the beginning of his private investigation.
Vultures at the Watering Hole	Shrinking water source, muted colours.	Vultures working at the edges; no other animals present to see it.	Should feel like something happening 'off-stage' — slightly hidden from the main jungle activity.
The Owl's Whisper	Quiet corner away from the crowd, evening light.	Old owl speaking closely to young crow; celebration sounds/lights visible in the distant background.	Intimate, hushed composition contrasted against a lively but oblivious crowd in the distance.

Illustration Briefs — Book V

For the illustrator: each row describes one page/spread — setting, characters, action, and mood — to guide artwork consistent with the original series style.

Scene	Setting & Mood	Characters & Action	Visual Notes
The Parade of Speeches	Jungle clearing turned festival ground, torchlight, banners.	Jackal mid-speech on a raised mound; crowd cheering, dancing.	Maximize visual energy and color here — it should feel genuinely fun and distracting, not obviously sinister.
The Crow's Lonely Flight	Jungle edges — shrunken water hole, thinned grove, strange tracks.	Young crow alone, flying low over the damaged areas, calling out.	Quiet, empty, muted tones — sharp contrast to the festival scene.
The Lion in the Shadows	Tall grass beyond the jungle boundary, distant parade lights visible.	Lion reclining, watching from a distance, calm and satisfied.	Keep him partially obscured/silhouetted — visually reinforce that he is never fully seen by the jungle.
Council Dismisses the Crow	Council clearing, formal seating, some seats now different animals loyal to the jackal.	Crow presenting her findings; several Council members unmoved or distracted; old elephant trying to speak.	Show a visibly changed, more divided Council compared to Book II's unified circle.
The Son and Crow Compare Notes	Grove edge, evening.	Young elephant showing the crow his own tracked records; crow listening intently.	Collaborative, quiet determination — two dismissed voices finding common ground.
The Owl's Final Whisper	A high branch or quiet hollow, night.	Very old, nearly blind owl speaking to the crow one last time.	Tender, solemn mood; this should feel like a passing of responsibility between generations.

Illustration Briefs — Book VI

For the illustrator: each row describes one page/spread — setting, characters, action, and mood — to guide artwork consistent with the original series style.

Scene	Setting & Mood	Characters & Action	Visual Notes
The Dry Season	Western slope, visibly parched compared to earlier books.	Grazers and badgers discovering the extent of the damage.	Use visual callbacks to the lush jungle of Book I to emphasize loss over time.
The Elephant's Question	Council clearing, evening, quieter than Book V's festival scenes.	Old elephant standing, small but resolute; Council falling silent around him.	A single spotlight-like beam of light on the elephant to mark the turning point of the story.
Counting Together	The jungle's fences and edges, daytime.	Crow leading a mixed group of animals along the fence line, examining tracks and marks together.	Communal, methodical mood — many species working side by side, unlike earlier solitary scenes.
The Trail Revealed	Boundary between jungle and tall grass beyond.	Council and animals looking outward, tracks leading into the distance; suggestion of the lion's now-empty resting place.	Do not show the lion directly — keep him implied/absent, reinforcing his elusiveness even at the reveal.
The Quiet Return	Fences and grove, animals working together, no banners or parades.	Badgers, grazers, tortoise, and others rebuilding — replanting, repairing fences.	Muted but hopeful palette; labor instead of spectacle.
The Old Elephant's Final Words	Same banyan tree as earlier books, now very old and large.	Very old elephant speaking softly to a circle of young animals, crow perched nearby.	Echo the banyan tree compositions from Books II and III one final time to close the visual arc of the series.